Dear Members of the Northeastern Community,

This is the next in a series of periodic reminders about individual and institutional responsibilities around protecting sensitive information, and the requirement to read and comply with relevant University policies on use of information and information systems.

Spring 2013 Information Security Tips:

Springing Forward
Remember that Daylight Savings Time begins this weekend at 2am March 10th. Remember to set your clocks forward 1 hour as we move away from Standard Time. While most computer and electronic systems will automatically make the change, it is always a good idea to verify that it has occurred correctly to ensure proper functionality.

Here Comes Tax Season
It is that time of year once again and the pressures of looming deadlines and keeping the IRS happy, lend a special advantage to those who would like to steal your personal information. Around this time of year we see a huge uptick in “Phishing” emails. These especially take the guise of an ‘official looking’ communication often purporting to be from the IRS and identifying some problem with your return or claiming you owe taxes. These social engineering methods play on your trust and attempt to circumvent your judgment by using familiar information and subtle threats. Many victims relate a “feeling that something wasn’t right”, but respond despite their better judgment. If you receive any such email it is often best to delete it immediately, or contact the NU helpdesk at x4357 or help@neu.edu if you have any doubts.

Out with the Old and in with the New
Are you getting a new computer or other electronic device? Remember the information on your old device can be easily stolen by someone who knows how to access it. Take the proper steps to ensure your computer or device is properly scrubbed clean of personal data before you recycle or give it away. University owned computers must follow the Asset Disposition Process (http://www.northeastern.edu/facilities/ADF1.pdf). This ensures that all confidential and protected data is removed from a device, or that the device itself is appropriately destroyed. Failure to do so could lead to a serious loss of confidential and personal data.

REMEMBER: Northeastern University WILL NEVER ASK FOR YOUR PASSWORD. Any email you receive claiming to need your login and password is spurious and should be deleted without replying. If you have given a password to another person, change the relevant password immediately. Each of us is held responsible for all activity conducted under our user ID and password.
Protection of Sensitive Information / Regulatory Compliance:
Social Security Numbers, dates of birth, grades, non-public personal financial information, protected health information, and other similar types of sensitive information are to be protected at all times from unauthorized disclosure and/or use, consistent with applicable University policies and/or applicable Federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Financial Services Modernization Act (also known as Gramm-Leach-Bliley), the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003, and Massachusetts Data Security Regulation MA201 CMR17.00. Personal information of members of the Northeastern community, including but not limited to students, faculty and staff, may not be posted or maintained on public networks or sites, unless the user fully complies with applicable laws and regulations governing handling of personal information.

Compliance with Copyright Law and Software Licensing Agreements:
All members of the community are required to comply with copyright law and software licensing agreements. In addition, all software installed on University-owned devices shall be the product of legal copies, and shall be properly licensed at all times. University resources shall not be used to offer, exchange or store copyrighted materials nor the indexes pointing to such materials, unless the use is in compliance with copyright law or other applicable regulation. All use of file-sharing technologies shall be in strict compliance with University policy and copyright law.

Responsibilities under Regulation:
Our responsibilities under regulation includes, among other reasonable steps, that we refrain from displaying or listing sensitive information in public venues such as hallway bulletin boards, office doors, globally shared computer files, and publicly-accessible web sites, that we observe privacy practices, and that we use appropriate safeguards to protect sensitive information and information-bearing devices from unauthorized access, alteration, theft or loss. These responsibilities include taking appropriate steps to ensure confidential/sensitive paperwork is properly discarded, that mobile devices are appropriately protected from loss or theft, and that computer disk drives and information storage devices are properly processed to remove sensitive information prior to reallocation or disposal.

Consequences Arising from Unauthorized Disclosure or Loss of Sensitive Information:
The potential consequences of unauthorized disclosure or loss of sensitive information may include for the individual, loss of privacy, identity theft, financial loss, erosion of customer confidence, and for the University, damage to reputation, civil penalties, and regulatory sanction. By recognizing the value in protecting sensitive information, the University is better positioned to avoid these consequences, maintain customer trust, and enjoy a reputation more demonstrative of the University commitment to excellence and distinction, and other goals to which the University aspires.

Requirement to Read and Comply with the Appropriate Use Policy (AUP):
The Appropriate Use Policy describes policies for use of all computers, networks and telecommunications facilities at the University. All members of the University community are required to read and comply with the AUP, which can be read at www.infoservices.neu.edu. Use of University computer/telecommunication networks and/or computers, implies agreement with the terms of the Appropriate Use Policy.

Shared Responsibility
Security is a shared responsibility. Do your part to help promote a safer and more secure computing environment by observing and supporting secure practices in your academic or business unit. If assistance is required, please contact itsecurity@neu.edu

Thank you for your time and attention.

Warmly,

Mark T. Nardone, MIS, CISSP
Director of Information & Technology Security